

Prioritising Work Tool: **Covey's 4 Quadrants**

Description

Plot the activities you do in each quadrant and then the percentage of your working week that reflects the amount of time you are operating in each one.

Quadrant #1

We often work in quadrant 1, believing most if not all of our work is important and urgent. This is reactionary and stressful. We will tend to treat all of our work as pressing problems which lead to a crisis management style. It is not unusual for us to discover that we spend 90% in this quadrant. Consequently, we cannot be working to our optimum but instead are heading for "burn out". Aim for no more than 20% in quadrant 1.

Quadrant #2

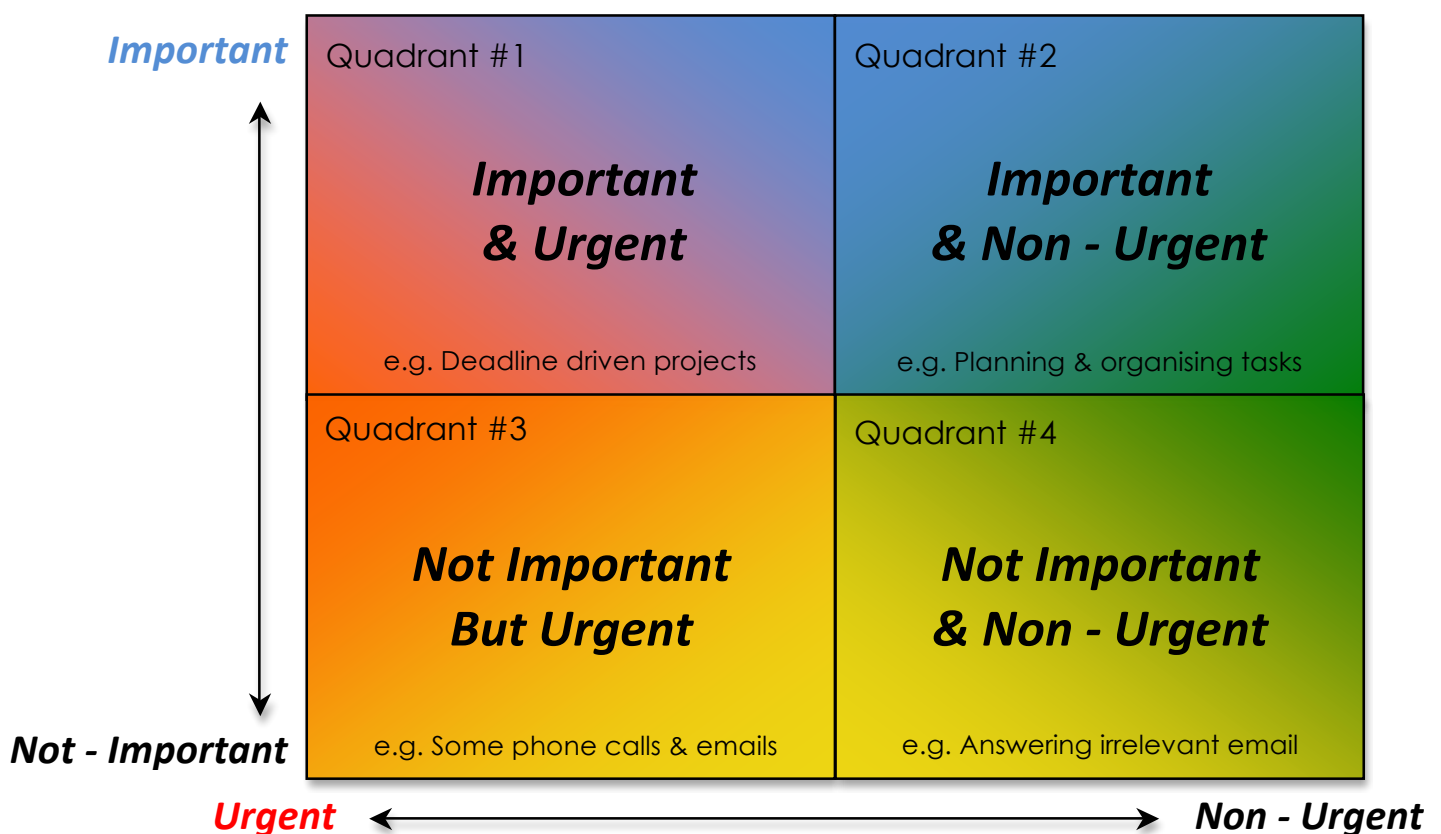
The ideal quadrant to work in is quadrant 2. This is the working smarter alternative. Aim to work 60%-80% in this quadrant by prioritizing work demands according to their importance and non-urgency. Not everything you do has to be acted upon immediately. Use thinking time effectively to focus, plan and prioritise your work demands and complete them within a short time frame as a bunch. Create space for quadrant 1 by shifting your priorities into quadrant 2 activities. You will feel less stressed and in turn be more effective in your role.

Quadrant #3

Quadrant 3 activities can be minimized. Re-examine what activities take up your time that are not important and consider what the urgency is about completing them. Can they be moved into quadrant 2? We ought to spend a minimum amount of time on tasks in quadrant 3.

Quadrant #4

Activities in Quadrant 4 can either be dropped all together or used as a break from the pressure. Playing computer games or taking a walk around the lake, for instance, lies in this quadrant. Review your working week and try to allocate a set time when you will do quadrant 3 & 4 activities so they don't take up more time than they should.



Further Information/Reading

Stephen Covey (1994). *First Things First*. Business Press, UK.